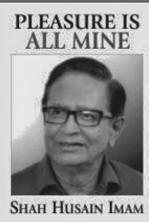


# Do Trump's numbers add up?



PLEASURE IS ALL MINE  
SHAH HUSAIN IMAM

**D**ONALD Trump's crazy Turkish dance of a saga continues. He has not just got his steps wrong, his numbers too are flying in the face of his pet theories and projects.

The first rap on his knuckles comes from this: Out of 553 job positions attached to the presidency, 503 have yet to be filled in. The Oval Office, to which much of the world keeps its antenna high, is working very short-handed! With so much to do in this trend-setting period (or is it?), it is baffling to his Republican constituency, to say the least. More than two months have elapsed since the 45th president of the United States had been inaugurated into office - that many unfilled spaces could mean one of these three things: First, many of the potential contenders to Donald's bandwagon may have either pulled back or adopted a go-slow approach. This is not entirely inexplicable given controversies surrounding the president's handling of some key appointments. He is yet to live down the fallout. Secondly, the Congressional hearings on the nominees may have been too probing for comfort for many of them. Thirdly, of course, Donald is being choosy just now to find someone without 'conflict of interest'. That is a number game he would



hopefully play out with reasonable success down the line. But what about his fantastic obsession centering around building a massive wall along the Mexican border? The tender documents for the project have been released by the US government. All that is fine and dandy - the dramatics, I mean; but one cannot help point out a big hole in the calculations. With 40 percent of the so-called illegal Mexicans taking the aerial route to reach America, i.e. flying

into the country, could the US authority contemplate the absurdity of raising a sky-high wall to deter them? So, it is one of Trump's inherently faulty resolutions. The US president has nullified the environmental restrictions that were applicable to the coal industry. Thus, he has created 2.48 million jobs for Americans, mortgaging the future well-being of many more people including that of the employed ones. Experts point

to a likely adverse impact on rivers. What he said about Germany owing money to the US has been refuted by the Germans. One need not be a Merkelite to see through a reactive veneer of a diplomatic etiquette 'as shallow as an eye-bath'. That said, one is taken aback by his ingenious method of coming up with a newer ban for what sounds like an over-perceived aviation safety threat. The latest on the list of bans is one on carry-

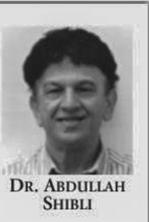
on electronic devices, laptop for one, on flights originating in or going to Middle East or North Africa. This has sparked off a huge debate. Some consider the ban as having been deliberately contrived to create a disconnect with reality. Where fake or fabricated news is being dished out by people in authority - and it is claimed to be 'better than lies' in the pecking order of misinformation or disinformation campaigns - why should a modern gadget of the business world be prohibited in-flight? Develop fail-safe metal detectors with as sensitive a chip as you can implant, but don't ban a useful tool on flights. There is a weighty piece of news to break. The anti-ISIS coalition, consisting of 68 members, met in Washington for the first time since 2014. They are working on the perception that ISIS is "on the cusp of dying", having been driven out of Mosul, one of their last strongholds. Now the final showdown is set to take place in Rakka. The challenge will be not so much about defeating ISIS but avoiding a humanitarian disaster staring in the face. For his part, Donald Trump is trying to bring command gradually and slowly. But he cannot let his support base be disillusioned for long through indecision. His approval rate is at its lowest since taking over power - 37 percent - and he better keep that in mind as he goes forward.

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## RAMPAL POWER PLANT

# Can we have a fact based discussion?



DR. ABDULLAH SHIBLI

**S**HOULD Bangladesh go ahead with the coal-powered plant in Rampal? I struggled with the question for many months before I could put together a coherent line of thought and argument. My stance as an environmental economist is to weigh the costs, including environmental, social, and political against the benefits of building a power plant which will be vital for our future energy needs. And, as an environmental advocate, my heart was with the millions who have been asking the government to weigh once again the ecological, social, and environmental costs of the project. There can be no denying that there is a potential for major environmental impact from a coal-powered plant of this magnitude, but there are mitigation and remediation options. The 1320-MW plant has multiple negatives, or "baggage" in everyday parlance, associated with it. These have been listed in the media, publicised by the opponents, and evaluated carefully by both sides. The three major ones are the ecological damage to the Sundarbans, the health cost for the population during construction and operation, and its contribution to global warming. Therefore, it is not surprising that this project has generated so much public discussion in Bangladesh as well as in the international forum allied with the global warming collaborative. Nonetheless, the construction of the power plant has progressed, albeit at a pace slower than expected and now it is projected to be completed by 2019. Amidst renewed concerns from all walks of life regarding the validity of the environmental impact assessment (EIA) done almost eight years ago and approved in 2013, the authorities need to seriously consider the impact of

operating the project in light of advances in climate change science and damages caused by coal-fired power plants. Will Rampal be considered for AL a feather on its cap or a dark spot on its record? The question now hinges on several issues that are still up in the air. What is the source and quality of coal? Which technology will be used to minimise environmental impact? What type of equipment (turbines, boilers, and generators) are available? And what are the codified plans to mitigate any damage, enforce the rules and monitor all operations? In 2013, the government indicated that the Rampal plant will burn "high-quality imported coal," and "emissions of carbon, sulfur, fly ash and several other sorts of air pollution will be kept at a minimum level to avoid having any adverse impact on the environment." It is an open question how and why the plant can "avoid" having any environmental impact, given the lack of enforcement in Bangladesh. It may be mentioned that the government is yet to set the criteria for permissible levels of carbon monoxide, lead, sulfur dioxide [SO<sub>2</sub>], nitrogen oxides [NO<sub>2</sub>], ground-level ozone (O<sub>3</sub>), and particulate matter [PM], the six common air pollutants. It is well-known that modern clean technology in the coal-power domain is available, but they are expensive. Globally, the most commonly used technology is pulverised coal combustion (PC) in coal-fired power plants. Developments in the past decades in PC technology have primarily been in increasing plant thermal efficiencies by raising the steam pressure and temperature. Based on the differences in temperature and pressure, the technology is categorised into three tiers: subcritical, supercritical (SC) and ultrasupercritical (USC). The energy adviser to the Prime Minister said in September 2013 that Rampal "would be built using the latest ultrasupercritical technology, so it would not affect the environment of the Sundarbans". There

are a number of benefits that USC generators can bring: lower emissions, higher efficiency, and lower operating cost down the road. Based on existing plant data in the US, there is efficiency resulting from lower coal consumption per unit of power generated and reduced emissions for not "only CO<sub>2</sub> but sulfur dioxide, nitrogen oxide, mercury, PM-10 particulate, and fly ash". According to an Indian news source, *The New Indian Express*, Bharat Heavy Electricals Limited (BHEL), which won the Rampal contract, "... was selected under an open international tender for constructing the 'ultra-super critical thermal plant' at Rampal". The operator of Rampal, Bangladesh-India Friendship Company, and the Government of

Bangladesh will need to aggressively pursue the issue with BHEL, and choice of cleaner USC technology needs to be a high priority. USC or not, there are some key environmental goals that must be met. The EIA report promises that the "impact on ecosystem will also be minimum due to adoption of different pollution abatement measures." Some of the facilities that will be built are

indications that the project team has scaled back on some of the promises, and started back-peddalling on the quality of coal and generator technology. But, scepticism about the government should not prevent us from being vigilant. Finally, it is to be noted that going forward, Bangladesh is in a tight spot. It needs low-cost energy, but not at the cost of environmental degradation. We can hope that we can emerge from this long battle and be in a win-win situation by fusing the twin goals to combat global warming and simultaneously embrace a sustainable approach to economic growth.

The writer is an economist who has worked on numerous Environmental Impact Assessment studies in the US and Bangladesh.

*Unfortunately, there are indications that the project team has scaled back on some of the promises, and started back-peddalling on the quality of coal and generator technology. But, scepticism about the government should not prevent us from being vigilant.*



### A WORD A DAY

**"BLEEDING-EDGE"**  
adjective

At the forefront of technological development; technologies so new that they cannot be relied upon.

### CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

**ACROSS**

- 1 Stalagmite setting
- 5 Mine section
- 10 Persia, today
- 11 Intense fear
- 13 Electrical unit
- 14 Wisconsin city
- 15 "Don't test me!"
- 17 Senator Cruz
- 18 Brief rests
- 19 Eastern "way"
- 20 USO patrons
- 21 Richard of "Chicago"
- 22 Barn section
- 25 Disinfectant's target
- 26 Mosaic piece

**DOWN**

- 1 Municipal
- 2 Scent
- 3 Man's servant
- 4 Intertwine
- 5 Disrobes
- 6 Warms up
- 7 Curved path
- 8 Batter-dipped food
- 9 Phonograph part
- 12 Gives a makeover
- 16 Carpentry need
- 21 Sparkler
- 22 Play places
- 23 Capsize
- 24 Pennsylvania city
- 25 Jokes
- 27 Dead ducks
- 29 Golf course chunk
- 30 Ultra-competitive
- 31 Wide awake
- 32 Tears apart
- 36 NBA's Jeremy

### YESTERDAY'S ANSWER

P	E	A	P	O	D	N	O	E	L
R	E	G	A	L	E	A	N	N	E
O	R	A	T	E	S	D	A	T	A
P	I	P	E	S	C	A	L	I	F
S	E	E	N	S	O	L	A	C	E
S	E	E	N	T	E	A	L	R	E
J	U	S	T	F	O	L	K	S	
S	A	N	H	E	R	E			
A	M	I	G	O	S	B	A	S	E
C	A	F	E	S	R	A	P	I	D
R	I	O	T	L	I	N	I	N	G
E	C	R	U	A	T	O	N	C	E
D	A	M	P	G	A	N	G	E	S

### BEETLE BAILEY by Mort Walker

HI, SOLDIERS! THANKS FOR YOUR SERVICE! YOU'RE WELCOME, SIR!

IF HE SAW YOUR SLOPPY SERVICE HE MIGHT NOT BE SO THANKFUL

### BABY BLUES by Kirkman & Scott

WHEN I WAS YOUR AGE, I WOULD SAY THIS LITTLE RHYME: 'RAIN, RAIN, GO AWAY! COME AGAIN ANOTHER DAY!'

IT TOOK A LOT OF COURAGE TO ADMIT THAT, MOM.

YEAH, YOU WERE WEIRD.